

Caboose tops city discussion

By SONNI SCHWINN

Heber City Correspondent

HEBER CITY — For the third time in a row, the caboose on Heber's Main Street, used as an information booth by the Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce, was a major issue on the Heber City council's agenda recently.

Whether it should remain on city property in front of the new city offices, or be moved off Main Street, still was not decided. However, Mayor Gordon Mendenhall raised a new question: Who owns the caboose?

As requested by the council at their last meeting, Max Mawhinney, president of the Chamber, provided a \$1 million liability insurance policy on the caboose and drawings demonstrating some of the possibilities for renovating it.

A local engineer who had submitted a plot drawing, argued for the Chamber, saying, "I think if (the renovation of the caboose) is nicely done, and tastefully — that that symbol of our heritage can peacefully co-exist with the other symbol of our heritage — the old tabernacle building."

He pointed out that the business community supported the council's proposal to renovate the tabernacle for city offices.

"Now I think it's time for you to help us — help us preserve another piece of the heritage and history of this valley — that's the caboose," he said.

The Chamber has defended leaving the caboose on Main Street because it is a tourist attraction and provides information that helps increase the tourist supported businesses.

Mawhinney pointed out that when the restaurants and motels, it's good for the entire community.

"If you took your property tax and tripled it, you wouldn't come up with what you get from your business community," he said.

The mayor then questioned Mawhinney's constant referrals to "our" caboose. "I've searched the records very thoroughly and, as of today, neither the Chamber of Commerce, nor anyone else, has a valid contract or lease — I've got a bill-of-sale here, that covers a 1915, red and black, Union Pacific caboose."

He asked Mawhinney if the Chamber had any proof that it owned the caboose and said, "The owner of this may want it parked in Salt Lake. Are you speaking in behalf of the owner of the caboose? For whom are you speaking?"

"It's on consignment, to the city and the Chamber, for use — from the Wasatch Foundation and Museum. The letter I've got in our file says it was turned over by Lowe Ashton (owner of the Heber Creeper) to Heber City and the Chamber, for their use," Mawhinney answered. He pointed out that mayor Mendenhall was the president of the Chamber at the time the caboose was put where it is.

The mayor said there had been no contract in force since 1975.

Councilman Scott Wright asked him if he had something in his possession with information contrary to what Mawhinney understood and was reporting. When the mayor answered that he did, Councilman Wright asked him to present it.

"This is my personal property and not for public display," he responded.

Councilman Wright made a motion to allow the Chamber to "perfect the information we need and not harass them, and leave the caboose right where it is until we get it settled." Bob Morris seconded the motion but they were the only two who voted for it, so it didn't pass.

Councilman Wayne Clegg said the council had better things to do than discuss the caboose every other Thursday. He said a decision should be made immediately. He pointed out that Mawhinney had said the Chamber didn't have enough money to move the caboose and would need help from the city.

"There's nothing that says it will be moved in one piece," he said. "It can be moved board by board and I, for one, want to go on record that I think the caboose should be moved, the sooner the better. We should be through giving them extensions. If they don't want to move it, we can move it a board at a time."

The discussion ended with no new motions or decisions.

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for the First Amendment's Bill of Rights.

The survey findings indicated that in this presidential election year, denominational bias about candidates has dwindled to a remnant, in contrast to what it was 30 years ago.

Only 8 percent of Americans would refuse to vote for a Roman Catholic on the basis of religion, compared to 25 percent in 1958, and only 10 percent would refuse to vote for a Jew, compared to a previous 28 percent.

However, 70 percent say it is

important that the president have strong religious beliefs, and more than 60 percent say they wouldn't vote for an atheist or a homosexual.

Only 43 percent, however, say they wouldn't vote for a candidate who "has been having other love affairs."

Public unfamiliarity with the actual grounding of the volatile relationship of religion and government was seen in the survey finding that only a third knew freedom of religion was guaranteed by the Constitution's First Amendment.

